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Hawaii Women-Owned Small Businesses benefit from contracting forum

By Angela E. Kershner, Honolulu District Public Affairs

(FORT SHAFTER, HI - NR 13 -11) Over 160 small business owners, mostly women, attended the Hawai'i Army Industry Day for Women-Owned Small Business at the Nehelani Conference Center at Schofield Barracks, Hawaii Wednesday.

Co-hosted by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Honolulu District, the 413th Contracting Support Brigade (CSB), and the Honolulu Minority Business Enterprise Center (HMBEC), the program provided small business owners with the information and resources necessary to pursue government contracts.

"We are very proud of our success awarding work to qualified small businesses, but it takes constant effort on both our parts to keep the program successful," said Lt. Col. Douglas Guttormsen, Honolulu District commander.

Recently, the U.S. Small Business Administration expanded federal contracting opportunities for women-owned small businesses (WOSB). The WOSB Federal Contract program authorizes contracting officers to set aside certain federal contracts for eligible WOSBs or economically disadvantaged WOSBs (EDWOSBs) in 83 different industry groups within the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS).

Col. Michael D. Hoskin, Commander, 413th CSB, pointed out that the Department of Defense awarded \$2.13B in FY10 in the state of Hawaii. Of that amount, \$692M (32%) was awarded by the Army contracting offices with 8.02% to WOSBs.

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It made sense to focus this year's industry day on the program and women small business owners. To emphasize the significance of the WOSB program, the keynote speaker, Ms. Pamela Monroe, Associate Director, Army Contracting Command, National Capital Region, made the trip all the way from the East Coast to participate in this event. She stressed the importance of being prepared and not dropping the "set-aside baton."

"This is the first event of its kind in the state of Hawai'i," said Cathy Yoza, deputy for Small Business and Programs with the Honolulu District, causing the audience to break out in resounding applause.

Among the many speakers during the event were three women contractors who shared their experiences as small business owners.

Diana Wong, owner and president of D & D Construction, Inc. declared that as the mother of two children and a small business owner, "You never thought you'd work so hard in your life!"

Growing up watching her hard-working father, she learned to apply his work ethic to her own.

"I had this innate passion of one day owning my own business," Wong said.

Wong advised her fellow women small business owners to find what their competitive advantages are and to use them.

"Here, today...we already have our first advantage: Women-Owned Small Business," Wong said.

Julie Beck of Beck Environmental and Remediation Ltd. became her own boss after a bad experience working for another woman.

Beck emphasized the need for small business owners to become experts in their respective fields and to get to know the movers and shakers in those fields.

"Partner with people who are going to let you run your own business," said Beck.

The third WOSB speaker was Nadine Stollenmaier, owner of Dunhill Professional Staffing of Hawaii. Starting as an office assistant in 1988, Stollenmaier purchased the company in 1993.

"I guess I don't understand what 'no' means," said Stollenmaier.

After months of asking her boss for a chance to be a consultant, she was finally granted the opportunity. Stollenmaier quickly surpassed her coworkers and rose to the fourth ranked consultant in the company nationwide.

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“I was going to show *me* that I could do this,” said Stollenmaier.

Stollenmaier encouraged the conference attendees to use the resources available to them through the Department of Labor and the Small Business Administration.

“They’re helping. They are trying to help us...so give them a call,” said Stollenmaier.

The panelists had sound advice that could be applied to all business owners, but most of the day was geared towards educating women owners of small business about participating in the WOSB Federal Contract Program.

“We were really pleased to exceed our goals for the [last fiscal] year,” said Guttormsen. “And we look forward to continue working with you to exceed those goals again this year.”

For more information about the Honolulu District's Small Business Program, contact our Deputy for Small Business at (808) 438-8586 or email: CEPOH-DB@usace.army.mil.

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